

**A CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY OF THE 42-ACRE HILLSTAR PROJECT AREA,
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**

Prepared for

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SWCA Project Number 6498-004-AUS

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ABSTRACT

SWCA was contracted by Hillstar Investments, Ltd. to conduct a cultural resources survey of a 42-acre tract in southern San Antonio, Bexar County. The survey was associated with a planned residential development that would create several streets and cul-de-sacs and subdivide the project area into numerous, small residential lots. The survey was conducted to comply with requirements of the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Ordinance #80910. The investigations included a background literature review of the project area and a pedestrian survey with shovel testing.

The project area is located on the southwestern corner of the intersection of Loop 410 and State Highway (SH) 16 in southern San Antonio. The area is largely rural, despite being within the San Antonio city limits. The topography of the project area is nearly level, and Comanche Creek, a minor tributary of Leon Creek, passes through the eastern half of the property. Comanche Creek does not have a well-defined channel; it occupies a wide and marshy (at the time of the survey) depression. Leon Creek is located approximately 100 m west of the western end of the project area.

The investigations determined that the project area had been cleared of primary growth vegetation and converted to pasture and/or farm land at sometime in the past. No structures were noted on aerial photographs of the project area or on the soil survey aerials. No standing historical structures were observed within the project area during the survey, and the survey did not discover any prehistoric artifacts or features on the surface.

Because ground visibility was low, eighteen shovel tests were systematically excavated across the 36 acres within the proposed area of potential effect. No shovel tests were excavated within the creek channel because the ground was saturated. In general, the shovel tests encountered very compact soils with occasional gravel inclusions. None of the gravels appeared culturally modified. None of the shovel tests encountered buried artifacts or features.

No artifacts, features, or archaeological sites were found on the surface or within the shovel tests. The proposed development will not impact any significant archaeological sites, and SWCA recommends that the project be allowed to proceed as planned.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE: Hillstar 42-Acre Project Area.

SWCA PROJECT NUMBER: 6498-004-AUS.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: SWCA conducted a pedestrian survey with shovel testing of a proposed residential development comprising 42 acres in Bexar County.

LOCATION: The project area is located in southern San Antonio on the southeast corner of the intersection of Loop 410 and State Highway 16. The project area appears on the Terrell Wells USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map.

NUMBER OF ACRES SURVEYED: 36 acres.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Brett A. Houk.

DATES OF WORK: November 19, 2002.

PURPOSE OF WORK: The project sponsor is complying with City of San Antonio requirements regarding historic preservation.

NUMBER OF SITES: None.

LIST OF POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT SITES: None.

COMMENTS: No cultural resources were discovered on the property.

INTRODUCTION

SWCA was contracted by Hillstar Investments, Ltd. to conduct a cultural resources survey of a 42-acre tract in southern San Antonio, Bexar County. The survey was associated with a planned residential development and was conducted to comply with requirements of the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Ordinance #80910. The San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (HPO) oversees compliance with the ordinance.

The investigations included a background literature review of the project area and a pedestrian survey with shovel testing. Brett A. Houk, the Principal Investigator, and Kerri S. Barile conducted the survey on November 19, 2002.

No cultural resources were found during the survey of the project area. Therefore, this report follows the short report format recommended by the Council of Texas Archeologists for small projects with negative findings.

DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

The project area is located on the southwestern corner of the intersection of Loop 410 and State Highway (SH) 16 in southern San Antonio (Figure 1). The area is largely rural, despite being within the San Antonio city limits. The 42-acre project area is roughly triangular in shape, fronting Loop 410 on its northern side and having access to SH 16 on its eastern side. An adjacent parcel, which occupies the corner of the intersection of Loop 410 and SH 16, has several residential structures on it, but the 42-acre Hillstar property is undeveloped.

The proposed development would create several streets and cul-de-sacs and subdivide the project area into numerous small residential lots (Figure 2). Approximately 6 acres at the extreme western end of the project area would not be developed and were, therefore, excluded from the survey.

The topography of the project area is nearly level, and Comanche Creek, a minor tributary of

Leon Creek, passes through the eastern half of the property. Comanche Creek does not have a well-defined channel; it occupies a wide and marshy (at the time of the survey) depression. Leon Creek is located approximately 100 m west of the western end of the project area.

A review of the *Soil Survey of Bexar County, Texas* determined that three types of soils occur in the project area (Taylor et al. 1991). The eastern end of the project area and a narrow strip west of Comanche Creek are mapped with Houston Black gravelly clay, 1 to 3 percent slopes (Taylor et al. 1991). This is an upland soil that developed *in situ* and has little potential to contain buried cultural components with good integrity. The Comanche Creek channel has Trinity and Frio soils, frequently flooded (Taylor et al. 1991). These soils are flooded at least once a year. The western portion of the project area has Lewisville silty clay, 0 to 1 percent slopes (Taylor et al. 1991). These are alluvial soils that occur on terraces of the major rivers and streams in the county.

The geology of the project area reflects the proximity of Leon Creek. East of Comanche Creek, the project area sits on Eocene age Wilcox Group mudstones. Comanche Creek and the area to the west occupy much younger, Pleistocene fluvial terrace deposits related to Leon Creek (Barnes 1983).

METHODS

Background Review

An archaeological background literature and records search was performed by SWCA archaeologists to determine the locations and content of any previous surveys and recorded sites in or near the project area. The investigation included examining records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and the Texas Historical Commission.

Field Methods

To conduct the field survey, two archaeologists walked the entire project area and

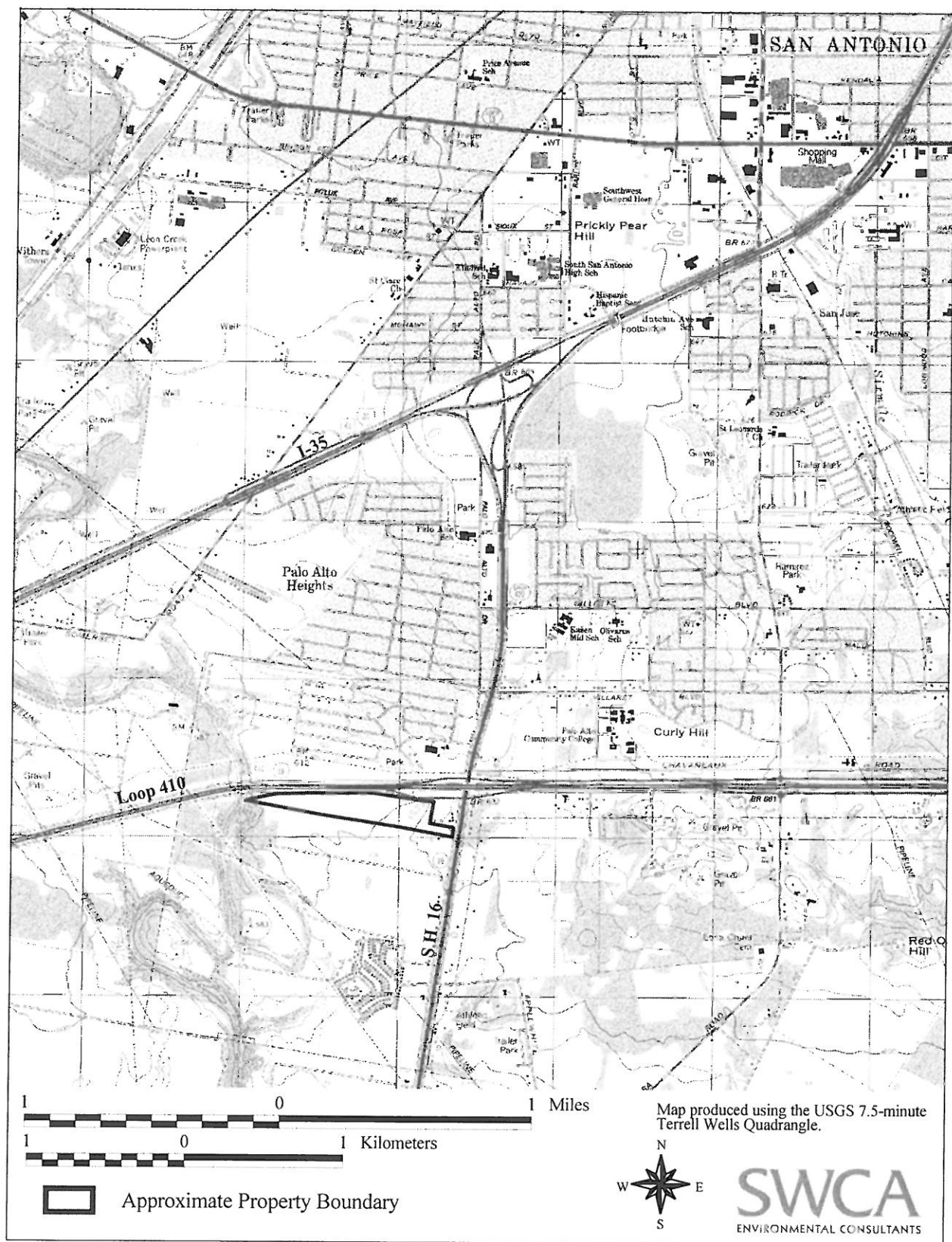


Figure 1. Project location map.

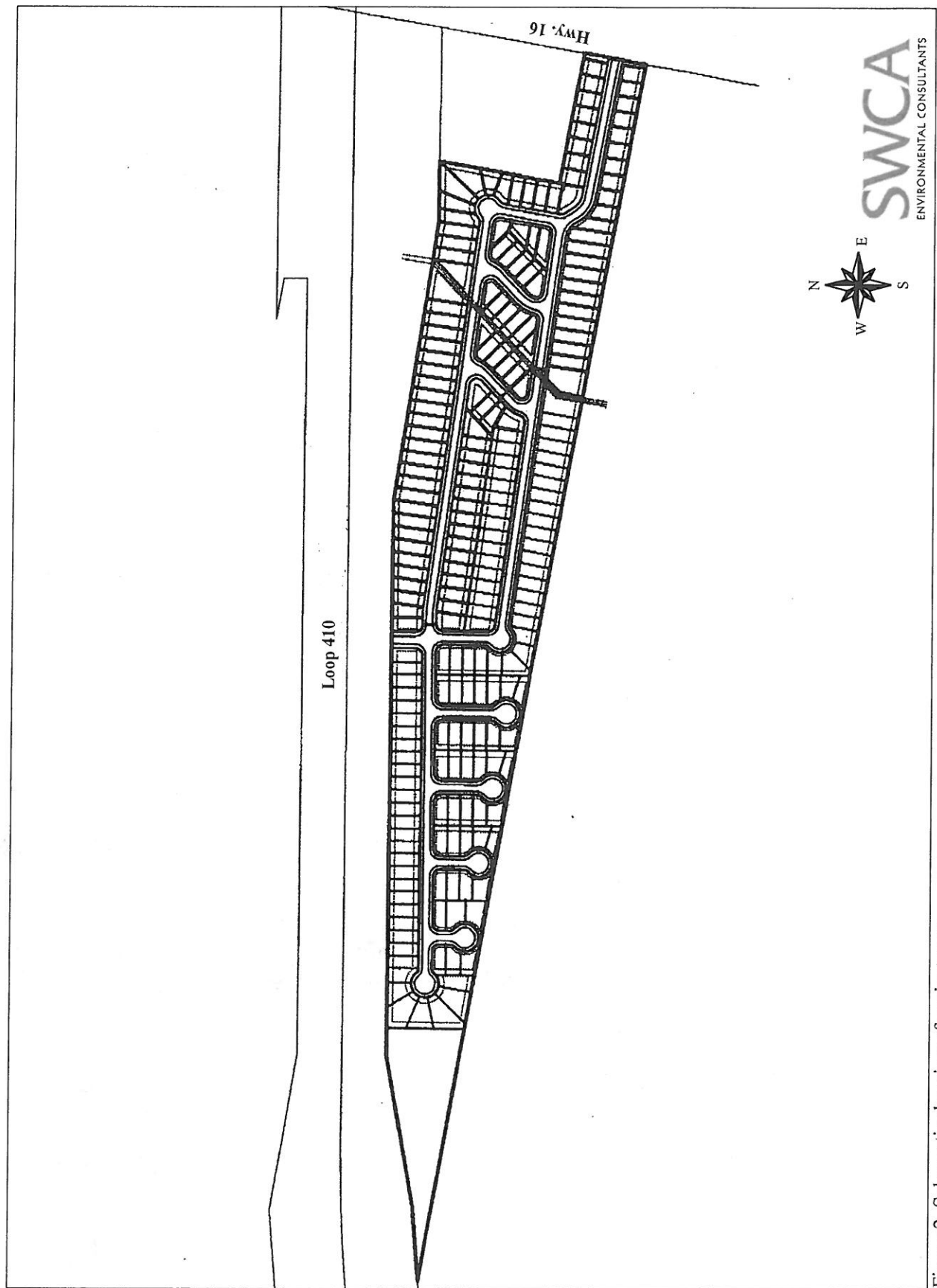


Figure 2. Schematic drawing of project area.

systematically excavated shovel tests to prospect for buried cultural materials. The shovel tests were excavated to between 50 and 70 cm deep; the compact soils of the project area made deeper tests too difficult. The areas of Houston Black clay were sampled with two shovel tests on each side of Comanche Creek. Houston Black clays generally have little potential to contain buried cultural material with good integrity. The western 6 acres of the project area were not shovel tested because they are outside of the proposed impact area. The crew recorded the location of each shovel test with a GPS receiver and photographed the project area to document existing conditions.

RESULTS

Background Review

The background review determined that the project area had not been surveyed for cultural resources, although the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT, now the Texas Department of Transportation) had surveyed the route of Loop 410 (SDHPT 1986). The survey recorded one archaeological site, 41BX704, on the eastern side of Leon Creek, adjacent to the western end of the project area. The site was destroyed by road and bridge construction within the right-of-way of Loop 410. Site 41BX704 was categorized as a prehistoric open campsite, but no temporally diagnostic artifacts were recovered.

In the late 1990s, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) conducted an intensive survey of Lackland Air Force Base, which is approximately 10 km northwest of the proposed Hillstar project area (Nickels et al. 1997). Archaeologists from CAR subsequently tested eight sites on the base for significance (Houk and Nickels 1997). The cultural history of the surrounding region and the history of archaeological research in southwestern Bexar County are summarized in the reports of those investigations.

Field Survey

The investigations determined that the project area had been cleared of primary growth vegetation and converted to pasture and/or farm land at sometime in the past. The western portion is covered in low grasses with small elm and mesquite trees growing adjacent to the boundary fences. The poorly defined channel of Comanche Creek is a muddy quagmire with a mixture of low grasses and 1.5-m high reeds. Scattered, young mesquite trees are present in an irregular band along the western edge of the creek's channel. East of the creek, the project area is overgrown pasture; high grasses and immature mesquite trees suggested that the area is being reclaimed by secondary growth. A horse and several cows were observed on the parcel during the survey. The small finger of property at the extreme eastern end, which fronts SH 16, is a fenced emu pasture, and was, therefore, not surveyed.

No standing historical structures were observed within the project area, and the survey did not discover any prehistoric artifacts or features on the surface. No structures were noted on aerial photographs of the project area or on the soil survey aerials.

Because ground visibility was low, eighteen shovel tests (STs) were systematically excavated across the 36 acres within the proposed area of potential effect (Table 1, Figure 3). The shovel tests sampled the Houston Black gravelly clay on both sides of Comanche Creek (STs 1, 2, 17 and 18). No shovel tests were excavated within the creek channel because the ground was saturated. The majority of the shovel tests (STs 3–16) were excavated in the Lewisville silty clay soils that comprise the western portion of the project area.

In general, the shovel tests encountered very compact soils with occasional gravel inclusions. None of the gravels appeared culturally modified. None of the shovel tests encountered buried artifacts or features.

Table 1. Shovel Test Data

ST	Depths (cm)	Munsell	Color	Description
1	0 to 35	10YR2/1	Black	Clay; frequent pebbles, very compact
2	0 to 30	10YR2/1	Black	Clay; frequent pebbles, very compact
3	0 to 25	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam with grass roots in top 15 cm
	25 to 80	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Clay loam with infrequent pebbles
4	0 to 10	10YR2/1	Black	Clay loam; very compact
	10 to 50	10YR2/1	Black	Clay loam; firm and less compact
5	0 to 10	10YR2/1	Black	Clay loam; very compact
	10 to 50	10YR3/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; frequent pebbles, very compact
6	0 to 70	10YR3/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; infrequent pebbles
7	0 to 10	10YR2/1	Black	Clay loam; very compact
	10 to 50	10YR3/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; very compact
8	0 to 20	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; compact
	20 to 70	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Loam; less clay, less compact
9	0 to 15	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; compact and clayey
	15 to 70	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Loam; less clay, less compact, infrequent pebbles
10	0 to 45	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Clay loam; very compact
11	0 to 55	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Clay loam; very compact, frequent pebbles
12	0 to 15	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; compact and clayey
	15 to 70	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Loam; less clay, less compact, infrequent pebbles
13	0 to 50	10YR3/3	Dark brown	Clay loam; very compact
14	0 to 50	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; very compact
15	0 to 25	10YR2/1	Black	Clay; frequent pebbles, very compact
16	0 to 50	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; very compact, frequent pebbles
17	0 to 25	10YR2/1	Black	Clay; >50% pebbles
18	0 to 20	10YR2/2	Very dark brown	Clay loam; very compact, blocky, 5% gravels
	20 to 50	7.5YR3/3	Dark brown	Clay loam; very compact, blocky, 5% gravels



Figure 3. Project area map.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hillstar 42-acre project area was thoroughly investigated by a team of two archaeologists. Eighteen shovel tests were excavated across the 36 acres that would be impacted by the planned development. No artifacts, features, or archaeological sites were found on the surface or within the shovel tests. The proposed development will not impact any significant cultural resources, and SWCA recommends to the HPO that project be allowed to proceed as planned.

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